

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 MCT-01 SY-05 HA-05 SSO-00
NSCE-00 INRE-00 ICAE-00 PM-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03
CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ARA-10 /080 W
-----057741 100816Z /15/53

O 081348Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 912

INFO /AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE 434

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 650

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

DEPT PASS HORN OF AFRICA COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGE: PINS, PDIP, ASEC DJ ET FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH CIVIL SERVANT KIDNAPPED, TAKEN TO ETHIOPIA

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2042, DJIBOUTI 361

1. SUMMARY. A FRENCH NATIONAL EMPLOYED DIRECTLY BY THE GOVERNMENT OF DJIBOUTI WAS KIDNAPPED BY SEVEN ARMED MEN IN VICINITY RANDA, NORTH OF TADJOURAH, IN EARLY EVENING 7 MAY. HE WAS THEN TAKEN TY CAR TO ETHIOPIA, WHERE HE IS BELIEVED HELD AT AFAR LIBERATION FRONT CAMP AT ALY DAAR. THE LOCAL ETHIOPIAN CHARGE HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MAN BEING HELD IN ETHIOPIA AND HAS PROMISED BOTH DJIBOUTIAN AND FRENCH AUTHORITIES THAT IMMEDIATE EFFORTS ARE BEING TAKEN TO SECURE HIS SAFE RELEASE. FRENCH AMB IS OPTIMISTIC THAT MAN WILL BE RELEASED THROUGH PROMPT INTERVENTION ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES.

2. A 52 YEAR OLD ASSITANT PUBLIC WORKS ENGINEER, M. BOUCAULT, WAS IN RANDA ON MONTHLY VISIT TO PAY LOCAL EMPLOYEES, HE WAS CAPTURED
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AT ABOUT 7:30 PM LOCAL 8 MAY BY SEVEN HEAVILY ARMED MEN BELIEVED TO BE MEMBERS OF THE AFAR POPULAR KLIBERATION MOVEMENT (MPL). DJIBOUTI INTELLIGENCE REPORTS INDICATE TEAM HAD SEVEN KALASHINIKOU ATTACK RIFLES, GRENADS AND A HEAVY MACHINE GUN. BOUCAULT WAS TAKEN IN A TOYOTA LANDCRUISER VIA THE LONG WINDING ROAD BETWEEN RANDA VIA DORRA TO THE BORDER CROSSING POINT AT BALHO. IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT BOUCAULT IS NOW AT CROSSING POINT AT ZOLHO. AN MPL

CAMP AT ALY DAAR, WHERE CUBAN INSTRUCTORS ARE KNOWN TO BE PRESENT (SEE DJIBOUTI REFTTEL ALY DAAR REFERRED TO AS ELY DAAR)). NO OPPOSITION WAS PROVIDED BY DJIBOUTI MILITARY AUTHORITIES AT BORDER CROSSING POINT AND NO FIRE WAS EXCHANGED. NO MESSAGE HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE KIDNAPPERS. THE KIDNAPPERS WERE NOT NATIVE TO THE RANDA AREA.

3. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN DJIBOUTI DID NOT LEARN OF INCIDENT UNTIL ABOUT ONE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING, 8 MAY, APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR AFTER GROUP CROSSED FRONTIER. PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULED CALLED IN ETHIOPIAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRS MUSA YASSIN EARLY THIS MORNING TO PROTEST THE ACTION AND TO DEMAND THE HOSTAGE'S RETURN. THE ETHIOPIAN OFFICIAL IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZED PROBABILITY THAT HOSTAGE HELD IN ETHIOPIA AND PROMISED FULL ASSISTANCE HIS GOVERNMENT'S RESOURCES TO SECURE RAPID RELEASE FRENCHMAN. HE SENT A VEHICLE TO GALAFI, WHERE AN ETHIOPIAN COLONEL IS PRESENT TO INVESTIGATE INCIDENT THREE DAYS AGO IN WHICH ETHIOPIAN MILITARY VEHICLE WAS DESTROYED BY A MINE ON ASSAB-ADDIS ABABA ROAD, WITH TWO DEATHS. THE TWO INCIDENTS DO NOT APPEAR TO BE RELATED, AND NEITHER FRENCH NOR DJIBOUTIANS BELIEVE THAT ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN KIDNAPPING.

4. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR, PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULED STATED THAT IF FRENCHMAN NOT RETURNED PROMPTLY, HE WILL CANCEL PLANS TO SEND MINISTERIAL DELEGATION TO ADDIS AND SUSPEND COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.
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THE DJIBOUTI GOVERNMENT RELEASED MODERATE STATEMENT THIS MORNING (SEPTTEL) TALKING NOTE THAT HOSTAGE TAKEN TO ETHIOPIA AND REQUESTING THE ASSISTANCE OF THE ETHIOPIANS IN SECURING HIS RELEASE.

5. FRENCH AMBASSADOR BASTOUIL IS OPTIMISTIC THAT PROMPT ACTION BY ETHIOPIANS WILL SECURE BOUCAULT'S RELEASE. THIS ASSISTANT ROAD ENGINEER EMPLOYED DIRECTLY BY THE DJIBOUTIANS AND NOT UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE FRENCH ASSISTANCE MISSION, WAS IN A TERRITORY CONSIDERED UNSAFE BY THE FRENCH EMBASSY, AND WERE NO MEMBERS OF FRENCH AID MISSION ARE PERMITTED TO GO. HOWEVER, BOUCAULT IS REPORTEDLY WELL LIKED BY THE AFAR POPULATION OF THE AREA, AND ONE OF BOUCAULT'S ASSISTANTS BELIEVES THAT LIBERATION FRONT MEMBERS FROM RANDA AREA IN THE ETHIOPIAN ALY DAAR CAMP WILL PROVIDE FOR HIS PROTECTION UNTIL HE IS TAKEN CHARGE OF BY ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES. FRENCH AMBASSADOR BASTOUIL BELIEVES THAT INCIDENT MAY BE POSITIVE, IF BOUCAULT IS RESCUED UNHARMED, BECAUSE ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES WILL BE REQUIRED TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTROL THE VARIOUS AFAR DISSIDENT ELEMENTS NOW SURROUNDING DJIBOUTI'S NORTHERN FRONTIER. THIS IN TURN WILL ENCOURAGE PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULD TO CONTINUE HIS CURRENT POLICY OF RECONCILIATION WITH ETHIOPIA. BASTOUIL ALSO BELIEVES THAT IF THE KIDNAPPING ACTION

IS LINKED TO INDEPENDENT INITIATIVES OF CUBAN ADVISORS IN REBEL CAMPS, IT COULD CAUSE ETHIOPIANS TO REFLECT ON CUBAN ROLE IN SUPPORT REBEL GROUPS.

6. AN ADDITIONAL MATTER OF INTEREST IN THIS FOURTH TERRORIST INCIDENT IN DJIBOUTI SINCE SEPTEMBER 1977 IS THAT IT OCCURS AT A TIME WHEN THE ETHIOPIANS APPEAR INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING SOME FORM OF SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH FRANCE (SEE ADDIS REFTTEL). AMBASSADOR BASTOUIL NOTED TO THE CHARGE TODAY THAT ETHIOPIA HAS REQUESTED PERMISSION TO SEND A HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION TO FRANCE TO DISCUSS WAYS OF IMPROVING RELATIONS. BASTOUIL NOTED WRYLY THAT IT WOULD BE IN THE INTEREST OF ETHIOPIA TO REPATRIATE BOUCAULT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, IF ETHIOPIA EXPECTS TO HAVE A FAVORABLE RESPONSE FROM PARIS.
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CLARK

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED.

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NNN

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